



ACTIVITIES FROM “BUILDING A VISION FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR PROJECT”

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Power of Hope Trainers

1. Personal Mission: Life Stream Drawing

A visual arts and storytelling activity to help members of your team or project see how their job or project work fits in with their larger life mission.

Begin by explaining that we are going to use the metaphor of a river to represent our lives. The exercise begins with a short visualization (eyes-closed imaginative experience) in which participants are asked to imagine they are floating down a river. The river begins with their birth, continues to the present and then goes on into the future. As they float down the river ask them to notice the most formative events and relationships that shaped or impacted their lives. Give them 3 or 4 minutes to do this. Pass out large sheets of blank white paper, crayons, colored pencils, or pastels. Ask participants to open their eyes and create a drawing of their life as a stream. Ask them to include at least three or four twists and turns, each representing an important person or event that has led them here, shaped their sense of purpose, and influenced their decision to become involved with their current work. At the end of the stream ask them to create three forks, each representing a direction this current work might take them. (If you're a one-year Americorps volunteer, for example, what possible directions might your life take at the end of your term...be concrete.)

Then ask participants to list:

- three strengths or qualities you hope to give to this project
- three things you hope to receive through doing this work
- one quality you'd really like to develop in yourself through doing this work

Share the pictures and personal stories in groups of six. Suggest that they look for common themes in each other's lives? Are there shared values and aspirations that members of the group hold? What are they? How might your personal mission overlap with the mission of your organization or project? How might your personal mission differ from that of the organization?

2. Tapping into the Essence of Your Organization

This visual arts exercise helps identify the deeper theme or purpose of an organization and formulate a dynamic and energized image of the organization's character and direction.

Give group members a big (11 by 17) sheet of blank white paper and crayons or pastels to work with. Then ask each group member to imagine the organization or project as a living being and ask them to represent their concept of who that being is using the visual art tools you have given them. Allow about 15 minutes for participants to complete their drawing and offer encouragement by saying that this is not a contest and that none of these images will be cast in stone. Then ask group members to share their drawings with each other and discuss the aspects represented in the individual creations, looking for similarities and differences. What usually follows is a deep and uplifting conversation about what the shared work is all about and where it can go in the future.

3. Memory of the Future: A Vision of Achievement

This writing exercise helps participants form a clear, concrete image of the goals they would like to achieve.

Imagine you are in a future time, at the end of your project. You are at an awards banquet, a community celebration, you're talking to a friend about what has happened, or you're walking into your workplace. Using stream of consciousness-timed-writing, describe what has happened between now and then. Let yourself be daring and bold--think big, but stay within the realm of the possible. Describe what you see, what you hear, how it feels. So, for example, if you are working in a youth center, you might describe being in that center eight months from now. How have the youth changed? (Give examples of particular youth you work with.) What does the place look and feel like? What is the quality of the work life? Share the writing or ideas and images from the writing in groups of three or four.

4. Bullseye Process: Putting Vision Into Action

This is a hands-on planning process that can be used by individuals or groups to identify next steps and mobilize a holistic approach to accomplishing those goals.

The form that is used for this process is self-explanatory. If there are questions, it is likely to be regarding the difference between the goal and the objective. The goal is a more broad statement about where the individual or group is headed and the objective has to do with activities that demonstrate the active implementation of that goal. An example would be a personal goal of being more confident about public speaking. An objective would be to participate in an open mike or volunteer to speak at an upcoming conference.

After completing the bullseye form ask participants to break into groups of 3 or 4 to discuss and comment on each other's plans. Good questions to ask are: How achievable is that goal? To what extent do the objectives demonstrate achievement of the goal? Has the person being focused on missed anything in terms of what skills and resources they are bringing to the table? Encourage group members to take a really active role in listening and responding to each other's action plan.